

SUFFERINGS OF THE LOST.

BY REV. J. H. MARTIN, KNOXVILLE, TENN.

It is a prominent and awfully solemn doctrine of Scripture, that the wicked shall undergo punishment in the world to come. Their sufferings will be exceedingly dreadful. We are warned to flee from them. I propose to unfold, in several particulars, the sources of that misery which the lost shall endure in eternity.

1. They will be deprived of all the pleasures and means of happiness which they possessed and enjoyed in this world. Notwithstanding the blight and curse of sin are upon all terrestrial scenes and objects, and the earth is far from being that lovely paradise in which our first parents had their abode, yet this world is still a pleasant theatre of existence, abounding with varied beauties, charms, and delights. Its scenery is diversified, magnificent, inexpressibly lovely and glorious. It is daily lighted up with the rays of the sun, which are poured forth in a living flood, causing the earth to shine with his glory. To the eye are revealed its mountains, hills, valleys, and various inequalities of surface; its trees, flowers, grasses, meadows, cultivated fields and virgin forests; its springs, fountains, brooks, rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans; its prevailing colour of green, and other tints and hues; its various tribes of animals, the lordly race of man, and the works of art executed by his hand. Such are the visible decorations, charms, and glories of earth, which perpetually meet and please the eye, and afford enjoyment to the soul of man. His ear is regaled with sounds of melody; his palate is gratified with agreeable food and drink; fragrant odors excite sensations of delight through the organ of smelling.

As a social being, he derives happiness from the company and conversation of others. He enjoys the endearments of home, the sweet felicities of the domestic circle, the pleasures of friendship, and the delights of intercourse with the world at

large. As a being formed for activity, and endowed with various propensities which seek gratification in their appropriate objects, he finds pleasure in the exercise of his powers, and in the pursuit and accomplishment of ends which he esteems profitable, desirable, and worthy of his endeavours. We see men busily engaged in a hundred different employments, mechanical, agricultural, commercial, professional, political, literary, and scientific. Many seek, and some have acquired large wealth. The rich man surveys, with deep gratification, his vast landed estate or extensive city property, and loves to count over his specie, bank notes, bonds, mortgages, and other evidences of value. These things are a main source of his happiness. The pleasure-seeker is happy in the midst of amusement, scenes of mirth, fashionable display and excitement, wherever attractive novelties are to be witnessed. The epicure is devoted to the pleasures of the table; the wine-bibber to his cups; the gamester to his cards; the sportsman to the race course. Some men are happy only in political life, others while engaged in travel, adventure, literary labors, or scientific researches and experiments. These various pleasures and excitements not only render this life tolerable, notwithstanding its cares, troubles, sorrows and vexations, but cause men to love it and cleave to it with a strong, tenacious grasp. Some even go so far as to say that, if it were left to them what to choose, they would be willing to live here forever, desiring no other and no better world than this.

Now what a punishment, what a source of pain and anguish what a very HELL must it be to ungodly and worldly persons to be separated by death from this cherished place of abode, and suddenly deprived of all their accustomed pleasures and gratifications! When they go hence, this effect takes place, and the utter loss of all earthly things and enjoyments becomes a part of their experience and source of their misery. In death the eyes of the wicked are closed forever to the pleasant light of the sun, the blue sky and green earth, and all the beautiful, familiar, and endeared scenes and objects of this life. They shall never be seen again. No sweet sounds will greet the ear, or pleasant odors excite the olfactory nerves. Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, and accustomed to fare

sumptuously every day, misses his delicious banquet, for no table is spread, no bread and wine are prepared. Hunger and want are substituted for feasting and plenty. The drunkard is cut off from his bowl, the gamester from his cards, the lover of amusements from his accustomed places of resort. Social joys and friendships are ended. The man of trade, of business, of politics, has nothing to do. The occupation of the farmer, merchant, physician, lawyer, student, author, and statesman is gone. The rich man is stripped of his all, and penniless. All light, all beauty, all friendship and society, all business, all wealth, pleasure, fame, honor and glory—every thing that ministered to the sinner's comfort and happiness in this world, is absent from him in the state to which he descends immediately after death. As in oriental countries, the prime minister and favorite of the king, who is at the pinnacle of greatness, is suddenly deprived of all his offices, honors, power, riches, and felicity, degraded to the very lowest condition, and imprisoned in a dark, filthy, loathsome, disagreeable dungeon. So the soul that is lost will exchange a residence on earth, with its manifold delights, for a state of imprisonment, darkness, and utter destitution of all things.

2. There will not only be a deprivation of former pleasures, the infliction of positive pain. Those who are lost shall visibly experience the wrath of God, both in their souls and bodies. They shall be cast into a place exceedingly dreadful and distressing. This place is denominated Hell. We do not know where it is located, but it is described in Scripture as a dismal scene of darkness, fire, and torment. It is the place of punishment for fallen angels and lost men, and is generally represented in the Bible as a vast fire, a sea of flame, a burning lake. Dives said, "I am tormented in this flame." In the day of judgment Christ shall say to them on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. " And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

We are taught that the body shall suffer as well as the soul. Christ said: "Fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Now of all natural agents for inflicting physical pain, fire is the most powerful and penetrating. It may be said that fire would soon consume the body, and put

an end to its capacity of suffering. But it is possible that God may so change it, that, like the burning bush, it will be forever in the flames without being consumed. There is a wood called *asbestos* which possesses this property of resistance to fire and heat. However much it may be burned, it is not reduced to ashes and destroyed. In like manner the body may be rendered incapable of destruction by fire, while its sensibility to pain continues lively and undiminished.

3. As the soul is spirit, and not matter, so its sufferings will arise from mental, and not physical sources. One of these will undoubtedly be memory. Abraham said to Dives, "Son, remember," regarding him as still retaining this intellectual faculty in his state of misery, and capable of recollecting the scenes, incidents, and events of his former life on earth. We have reason to believe that in the world to come the action of memory will be quickened and intensified, and that its operations will be amazingly swift. Instances have occurred of men, who supposed themselves to be drowning, but were rescued before life became extinct. They relate that, in the space of a few moments, their whole past life was brought vividly in review before the mind. They remembered every thing, even facts and incidents that seemingly had been long forgotten. Memory, under the power of excitement, revivified all past impressions and crowded the recollections of a life-time into the space of a few seconds. A story is told of a woman in Germany, who, in a time of sickness and mental derangement, repeated whole pages of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. She was uneducated, and the fact was a mystery. It was found on inquiry, that when a little girl she had been a servant in the family of a learned clergyman, who was in the habit of walking in his room and reading aloud in those languages. While engaged in household duties, she had heard him reading, and the words unconsciously to her and without understanding their meaning, had imprinted themselves indelibly on her mind. Memory, under the stimulus of disease, recalled and reproduced them. Such facts seem to show that nothing, once learned, is ever forgotten. An impression once made is never effaced. This being so, what an ingredient will not memory be in the misery of lost souls hereafter. How painful and distressing

the recollections of a life time spent in ungodliness, ingratitude, and sin; in the abuse of divine mercies, the transgression of God's law, the neglect of a crucified Saviour, the Holy Spirit, and means and opportunities of securing divine favor and eternal life. Every soul in that world will remember its own sins committed in the body. It will bitterly lament and bewail both its iniquities, and its folly in neglecting, by timely repentance, faith and prayer, to obtain pardon and redemption. Its language of self-reproach and sorrow will be, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved. I received abundant and oft-repeated instruction, warning, invitation, and entreaty with reference to my eternal happiness. I enjoyed long and ample opportunities of being saved, but I wickedly, foolishly, madly neglected them all. And now I am lost, lost, lost!"

4. Another element of suffering hereafter will be, *remorse of conscience*. Conscience is the self-knowing faculty in man. It is self-accusing, self-condemning on account of sins committed, while it applauds and justifies in view of actions that are lawful and right. Its accusations and reproaches are often exceedingly painful and distressing, even in this world. Remorse is compunction of conscience for a crime committed; keen pain or anguish excited by a sense of guilt. Judas was smitten with pangs of remorse and horror after his betrayal of Jesus, under the influence of which he went and hanged himself.

Conscience often causes those who have been guilty of crime to have frightful visions and dreams, and afflicts them with imaginary terrors of a most painful description. Like a man in a state of delirium tremens, they see themselves surrounded with serpents, fiends, and all kinds of monsters seeking to torment and destroy them. The murderer fancies that he sees the ghost of his slain victim, which is the most awful, dreadful sight he can behold. Shakspeare depicts Macbeth, the murderer of Duncan, King of Scotland, and of his general Banquo, as the subject of these remorseful pangs and terrible visions. When about to occupy a seat with his wife and certain noblemen at an evening banquet, he sees the ghost of Banquo enter the room, and sit down in the vacant chair designed for him. He starts back with horror, exclaiming:

"Thou canst not say, I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me."

He represents his wife, Lady Macbeth, who had shared in his deeds of crime, as also suffering under a sense of guilt, and betraying her excitement and remorse in her sleep.

The workings of conscience are seen in Herod, who, to gratify the malice of his wicked and unlawful wife, had cut off the head of John the Baptist. When he heard of the miracles and works of Christ, he said, "It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead." On this passage a Commentator remarks: "A guilty conscience needs no accuser. Herod charges himself with the murder of John, and the terror of it made him imagine that Christ was John. He feared John while he lived, and fears him ten times more when he is dead. One might as well be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience.

Reader, having a conscience, you carry what is capable of becoming a hell to you, in your own bosom. For if you die with your sins unpardoned and unwashed away in the blood of Christ, you shall suffer the stings and reproaches of a guilty conscience in the world to come. Remorse, preying upon the soul, will be the torture of the worm that never dies. O, as you desire inward peace and eternal happiness, strive to have an undefiled and approving conscience. Seek to have it purged from past sins and guilt by the cleansing blood of Christ, and labour to keep it clean in time to come. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Let conscience be enlightened and governed by the Word of God, and then you may say:

"What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do,
This teach me more than hell to shun,
That more than heaven pursue."

5. The misery of those in a lost state will arise from earnest and unallayed desires. Dives is represented as having an intense, feverish thirst for water, but not a drop of it could he

procure. Doubtless other kinds of good and enjoyment, such as men relished on earth, will be ardently craved, but shall not be obtained. The Greek mythology, in describing the different punishments of men in the lower world, represented Tantalus as standing up to the chin in water, which constantly eludes his lip as often as he attempts to quench the thirst that torments him. Over his head grow all kinds of fruits, but, whenever he reaches forth his hands to take them, the wind scatters them to the clouds. The wicked hereafter will no doubt indulge in vivid imaginations and visions of all sorts of pleasant, delicious things, and will burn with earnest longings after them. But, like Tantalus, they will be doomed to perpetual, endless disappointment. They will be tormented with fierce, unsubdued, raging desires, without being able to gratify them in the least degree.

Such a situation is extremely painful and wretched. The experience of men in this life demonstrates that scarcely any thing is more tormenting, than a burning appetite or passion, without the means and opportunity of gratifying it. How terrible are the sufferings of the drunkard, when deprived of his usual stimulus, and unable to obtain the fiery liquid which he so ardently craves! How great are the pangs of hunger and thirst, the appetite for bread and water, with no means of relief! Now the lost shall carry with them all their evil propensities and passions into eternity. Their appetites and desires will rage with irrepressible ardor and fury, and yet the objects of them will be beyond their reach, and wholly unattainable. Not a particle of gratification, not a drop of comfort, not a sensation of delight, shall they derive from any source whatever. Forever burning with earnest, feverish, unallayed desires, they will be tormented with them, and unable to obtain the least relief and mitigation of their distress.

6. The misery of the lost will spring from despair—the hopelessness of deliverance from their evil situation. If they had hope that their sufferings would one day cease, even after millions of ages, it would be to them a ground of encouragement, a ray of light in their darkness, a mixture of comfort in their cup of sorrow, a mitigation of their woe. But Hope shall be to them a stranger. That celestial com-

farter shall never visit and cheer them in their dark and dreary abode. Hell will be to its inmates the prison of despair. From it there will be no escape. Hence the dreadful words which the poet represents to be written on its gate:

Through me you pass into the city of wo:
 Through me you pass into eternal pain:
 Through me among the people lost for aye.
 All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

Dear reader, these things are solemn, momentous, awful realities, and I beseech you to act in view of them as their importance and dreadfulness demand. Do not regard them as idle tales, but believe in them as substantial verities matters of infallible truth and certainty, because revealed to us by God himself. Let the knowledge and fear of these future and eternal sufferings awaken in you a sense of danger lead you to repentance, induce you to fly at once for refuge and safety to Christ and to observe all things which he has commanded. The only way to escape this dreadful misery and enter into life, is, by conformity to the Gospel. This includes acts of repentance, faith, and prayer, the love and fear of God, and submission to his will, justice and mercy, humility, meekness, temperance, patience, and the practice of christian virtue generally. Religion reveals a method of justification. It is also designed to renew and purify the heart, remould the character, regulate and sanctify the conduct, that, by a timely preparation, we may be accounted worthy to escape all those evils that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. We are to have faith in the testimonies of God's word concerning invisible and eternal things, and be controlled by it in our actions. As Noah, by faith in a coming deluge, built the ark and escaped the flood, while the rest of mankind were overwhelmed and destroyed, so we are to spend this life in preparation for the day of judgment, that we may be delivered from the endless sorrows of the wicked, and share in the everlasting joys of the righteous.

